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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 TEGUCIGALPA 000521

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR OPS CENTER, WHA/CEN AND CA/OCS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/29/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [CASC](#) [EAID](#) [ELAB](#) [ETRD](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: HONDURAN COUP SITREP #6: EVENTS AS OF 06/30/09
13:00 LOCAL (15:00 EDT)

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 517

[1](#)B. TEGUCIGALPA 516 AND OTHERS

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Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b and d)

Opposing Demonstrations and Other Civil Updates

[1](#)1. (U) The anti-regime demonstration in Tegucigalpa peaked June 29 with a maximum of approximately 3,000 protesters before being dispersed by police and military, but has re-formed and as of noon local is headed along Avenida Miraflores toward the Presidential Palace, where RSO anticipates a clash with anti-riot police and military troops. The first major pro-regime demonstration began at 09:00 local in downtown Tegucigalpa, with an estimated 3,000 participants demonstrating peacefully. Participants displayed banners declaring "Micheletti is President" and "Zelaya don,t come back," and many wore "peace" t-shirts. Regime head Roberto Micheletti and head of the military Romeo Vasquez both spoke to the crowd.

[1](#)2. (U) In San Pedro Sula, opposing demonstrations of approximately 1,000 people each clashed in the Central Park, in front of the City Hall (Note: the mayor of San Pedro Sula had supported Zelaya's constitutional referendum proposal. End note). Demonstrators hurled rocks, according to a source on the scene. National Police (HNP) report they broke up the clash, and as of noon local the two groups are blocking traffic in separate sections of the city.

[1](#)3. (U) Police and law enforcement authorities confirm one anti-regime protester at the Presidential Palace was injured when he was run over by a military vehicle late June 29. In other parts of the country, anti-regime protests remain small and sporadic. Some opponents of the regime have claimed authorities have blocked Zelaya supporters from traveling to the cities.

[1](#)4. (U) Bus company operators have informed Mission employees

they have discontinued inter-city service as a result of roadblocks along the CA5 highway outside Tegucigalpa, in Comayagua, at the Taulabe exit and at the toll booth outside San Pedro Sula, which they assume are manned by anti-regime demonstrators. The size and nature of these actions has not been confirmed; Post will attempt to verify the nature of these roadblocks ASAP.

¶5. (SBU) Human rights leader Reina Rivera reports three buses carrying indigenous people from La Esperanza to the capital were detained en route by military troops. Her NGO CIPRODEH reports they have documented 126 arrests in and around Tegucigalpa which they consider associated with efforts to suppress anti-regime protests. Police reported that they have made 45 arrests in the pro-Zelaya protest yesterday. Other sources later told us that no one was being held. Rivera reports the human rights community has denounced Human Rights Commissioner Custodio for his politicized statements in favor of the coup. The groups plan to meet at 13:00 local to discuss the overall situation. Post is preparing a human rights roundup septel.

¶6. (SBU) On June 29, the presidents of the four Central American Integration System (SICA) countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras) signed a declaration in Managua stating that land borders would be closed to commerce for 48 hours in response to the current situation in Honduras. Post has obtained a copy of the declaration. It does not say at what time the 48 hour closure will commence. There are conflicting reports about how the closure is being enforced and whether it is being extended to non-commercial traffic. It appears some border posts have interpreted commercial traffic to include passenger buses, others not.

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Political Developments: Standing Firm

¶7. (C) Regime leadership and the overall political community in Honduras continue to express dismay at how the June 28 events are being perceived internationally, and concern that they are being abandoned by those they perceived as allies. They also have consistently reiterated their assertion that their actions June 28 were legal, in defense of democracy, and based on a consensus of the Congress and Supreme Court against a perceived threat to the constitutional order.

¶8. (S) Military and political contacts have expressed concern that if President Zelaya attempts a return to Honduras Thursday, July 2, it could incite civil unrest. They have expressed fear a Zelaya return would be followed by his dissolution of Congress, firing of all military leadership and declaration of a constituent assembly of his own design. They appear sincere in their convictions and their fears. A prominent business contact in San Pedro Sula agreed that the military's action June 28 had been drastic and of questionable legality. But he said the worst thing that could happen for the country now would be for Zelaya to return and resume the presidency, which he predicted he would then retain for 20 years. He thought a negotiated, conditional return might be possible, but should result in Zelaya being jailed.

¶9. (C) DATT received reports from his foreign attache counterparts that Defense Chief MG Vasquez met with them at 09:00 local on June 29 to assert their actions were based on orders received late June 27 from the Supreme Court.

¶10. (C) PolCouns spoke with Attorney General Rubi on June 29 and again on June 30 regarding claims from Zelaya supporters and family that they feared arrest. Rubi stated that there is a warrant out for President Zelaya's arrest on five different counts, ranging from abuse of power to treason. He said that if Zelaya attempts to re-enter the country, he will

be arrested based on this warrant. But Rubi assured Polcouns there were no warrants out on any other members of Zelaya's family or his administration related to the ouster. He noted some Administration officials had warrants prior to the events of June 28, however on unrelated issues. Rubi asserted that the Zelaya family need not worry about arrest. He noted that he would be happy to make a public statement regarding their safety, but as of noon local June 30 had not done so. He informed PolCouns that he understands the Zelaya family's wish to depart the country, and is prepared to assist in providing them safe passage.

¶11. (C) We continue to convey the USG position and explain why the international community is concerned and opposed to the ouster of a democratically-elected president, as well as a clear picture of what the events of June 28 will mean from an international perspective with regard to assistance, trade and political relations. Honduran counterparts continue unwilling or unable to distinguish what took place on June 28 from legal proceedings in U.S. and other nations, histories, and even cite our own impeachments as justification for their actions.

¶12. (C) While strictly enforcing the non-contact policy with Michletti government officials, the Ambassador and DCM met with presidential candidates Elvin Santos (Liberal Party) and Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo (National Party) in separate meetings June 29. Both disavowed advance knowledge of Sunday's coup and strongly condemned it. Santos said the coup was a "disaster" for him as his party would both take the blame for the illegal action and would be split between those who support Zelaya and those who support the coup plotters. Santos said that he was under much pressure to pronounce himself with one side or the other, but said that for now he

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did not plan to speak publicly. Lobo was in good spirits, obviously seeing the coup and the split of the Liberal Party as an advantage for him in the coming campaign. He lamented the defection of his party members in Congress June 24 when he had pushed them to accept a bill that would have offered a compromise on the poll scheduled for June 28, saying that they had been heavily influenced by the Catholic and Evangelical charges, which believed that Zelaya planned to call a Constituent Assembly immediately after the poll and scrap the current constitution. Lobo also said that Vasquez had called him Sunday and claimed that the military had moved on its own against Zelaya. (Note: Other information suggests that this is not/not true. End note.) The Ambassador explained U.S. policy towards Honduras, condemned the coup and stressed our support for the government of President Zelaya. The Ambassador urged both to reach out to Zelaya and to express support to him and his family, and also to be available to serve as a bridge to all sides for a compromise solution.

¶13. (C) Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez called on the Ambassador to request that the Ambassador do all he can to prevent Zelaya from returning with OAS Secretary Jose Miguel Insulza on Thursday, July 2. The Cardinal expressed his concern that Zelaya's arrival would be an incendiary move which would lead to further civil unrest and possibly civil war. He claimed that despite Zelaya's unlawful removal, his restoration would be untenable politically given the crimes he is alleged to have committed and questions on new details emerging from the Presidential Palace including the 60 million Lempira (3.2 m USD) of cash stashed in Zelaya's personal office. The Cardinal also said that he had seen the order to capture Zelaya and relayed allegations made by his pastors and parishioners about recent illegal arms shipments in Puerto Cortez, Nicaraguans with Honduran identity cards in El Paraiso waiting to vote for the Fourth Urn, and Zelaya's plan to immediately call for a Constitutional Assembly last Sunday after the survey was completed. The Ambassador agreed to pass on the Cardina's concerns to Washington. He explained U.S. policy towards Honduras, our condemnation of

the coup, and our position that President Zelaya is the legitimate President of Honduras. The Cardinal agreed to remain in close contact with the Ambassador and pass on information on breaking developments.

But What Do the Honduran People Think?

¶14. (C) The labor union leadership, a major element of Zelaya's power base, have claimed they have been suppressed by the authorities. Pro-Zelaya demonstrations have been sporadic and a call to march Monday by the teachers, union netted no result. Subsequently, primary and secondary teachers in Francisco Morazan Department received a written appeal from the union to protest in favor of Zelaya the afternoon of June 30. The proposed march route could put them on a collision course with an anti-Zelaya church-group march.

¶15. (C) Contacts outside political circles report a sentiment in the general populace of confusion and worry about what will come. A religious pastor in Tegucigalpa who ministers to poor communities reported a mix of opinions, but predominant was a sentiment consistent with what political contacts have been saying -- the ouster was in defense of democracy against a would-be dictator. They note the quick handover of control from the military to civilian rule contrasts this significantly with the coups of the past era. NGO contacts on the North Coast report a strong majority of people in that area support the ouster and oppose Zelaya's return, but are worried about potential civil instability. Another NGO in La Ceiba, however, reports the people there are politically neutral, and concerned more about disruptions

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to their daily lives and livelihood. An Univision Internet poll claimed 75 per cent of Hondurans support the coup. Post will continue to reach out to contacts beyond the capital and the political classes in the coming days to better understand what the overall populace thinks and feels.

Infrastructure and Communications

¶16. (U) Toncontin and San Pedro Sula airports remain open for international flights, and American, Continental and Delta airlines continue to operate flights as usual. Delays have been reported due to the airport staffs' difficulty reaching work during curfew hours, but an agreement has been made to let them through if the curfew is continued. TACA continues to have difficulties as a result of an unrelated commercial dispute.

¶17. (U) Landline telephones have been restored, as have electricity, Internet access and many television stations. Stations supportive of Zelaya are being allowed back on the air sporadically, and Zelaya's address to the UN was allowed through on CNN en Espanol, in contrast to previous days' limits.

Economic Repercussions

¶18. (U) The principal business federations -- the Honduran Private Enterprise Council (COHEP) and the National Association of Industries (ANDI) -- issued a joint declaration June 29 supporting the governmental transition and the Micheletti regime. They called for quick action to reinvigorate the national economy and create employment.

¶19. (C) Jesus Canahuati, a prominent business leader in the export processing ("maquila") sector and brother of former National Party presidential candidate Mario Canahuati, phoned

EconCouns this afternoon to express concern about the impact of the ongoing civil disorder on trade and economic activity.

He was particularly worried about the border closures and possible implications for CAFTA-DR. EconCouns said there was no discussion in Washington at this point of any trade sanctions, but economic and development assistance programs were under review. Canahuati asked what the business community could do to help resolve the political crisis. EconCouns advised avoiding further statements or actions that could inflame the situation or solidify the new regime as a fait-accompli, making a negotiated reconciliation process harder.

Consular and Embassy Operations

¶20. (U) The Embassy is open only for emergency services to Amcits only June 30, and Post will determine operational status for July 1 at a scheduled 2:00pm local (16:00 EDT) EAC meeting. The Embassy has canceled the official National Day event scheduled for July 2 at the Ambassador's Residence. At present, theplanned elebration for Mission personnel and th broader Amcit community for July 4 at the Agriculure Institute in Zamorano is still on, pending a ecision today by the EAC.

¶21. (U) The Consula Section has received welfare and whereabouts inuires on 250 Amcits to date via telephone and eail. Post has drafted a new warden message to be ssued as soon as it is cleared. Consular Sectioncontinues to regularly update ACS talking pointson the Embassy website.
LLORENS